



Newsletter: January 2021

Introduction

Happy New Year to all of our students, parents and staff. A return to remote learning is not where we would have hoped to be at this stage of the school year but nonetheless, it is important for all of us to do what we can to limit the spread of the virus in our community.

The current emergency school closure has presented many challenges for all schools. The situation remains volatile. We are monitoring closely decisions as they are communicated from the Department of Education, the State Exams Commission and other bodies. We will update our school community on these decisions and their implications for our school on a regular basis. Matters we await clarification on at the moment include deadlines for practical exams, conduct of oral exams, mock exams, CBAs, etc. Please be reassured that we will do everything in our power to keep our school community safe and to continue teaching and learning.

This newsletter will hopefully answer some of your more immediate questions and we will issue regular updates in the coming weeks.

Junior Cert Mocks

We had previously scheduled JC mocks to begin on Monday 26th January. As the school will remain closed until Monday 1st February, we have had to postpone the JC mock exams. We will inform you of a revised date as soon as is practicable.

2021/2022- Subject and Programme Choice for September 2021

- Current 1st Year Subject Choices

Our current first years will need to log onto VSware and list their subject options in order of priority for second year. **Subject preferences can be selected on VSware from February 1st to February 12th, 2021.** Please click on the link for information on how to input subject preferences on Vsware <https://support.vsware.ie/parent-app-notes-options>

If your son/daughter wishes to continue with a Modern European Language, **they will need to prioritise this as their FIRST option;** we guarantee 1st year students a place in a language class if they make the language their FIRST choice. This reflects the potential importance of Modern European Languages with regard to access to some third level courses. They must then prioritise their optional subjects including Geography, and their three other optional subjects in order of priority. They will continue to study three out of these five subjects in 2nd and 3rd year. Please be aware that places

cannot be guaranteed in any particular subject (with the exception of French and Spanish described above).

In line with Dept of Education policy, History is now a compulsory subject for all 1st, 2nd and 3rd years.

It is important to note, that it is possible that some students may not be allocated places in their top 3 choices as space in some subjects can be limited by maximum class size and availability of specialist teachers. The 2 subjects that first years drop will be included in their Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA) in 3rd year. Therefore, it is very important that 1st years continue to engage fully with teaching and learning of all of their optional subjects until the end of first year. We expect to inform parents of the subjects their son/daughter has been allocated in the final term of this academic year.

Please note: Students whose preferences are not entered in the system by Feb 12th have a lesser chance of getting their preferred subjects.

- **Transition Year applications**

3rd Years who wish to apply for Transition Year 2021/2022 need to complete the online application form before the deadline of **Friday, 29th January 2021**. Online TY Application forms will be available on our website for students to complete from Monday 18th January. We will not be holding interviews for Transition Year this year.

Transition Year has well-established and significant academic and personal benefits. Therefore, we encourage all parents and 3rd year students to seriously consider enrolling in the programme. Further info about TY is available on our website and 3rd year students have been briefed by the TY co-ordinator about the programme.

Please note, Creagh College reserves the right to refuse a place in TY to students who are not deemed suitable for the programme. In the event of such a decision parents will have an opportunity to appeal. Also, late applicants will only be considered for TY should places remain available. The number of places available will be determined by the number of applications received and the broader school planning processes. It is recommended that students planning to participate in TY submit their preferred 5th year optional subjects on VSware (see below). This will mean that should they change their mind about TY or fail to secure a place, their preferences will still be considered in designing the 5th year timetable.

Please see <https://creaghcollege.ie/academic/transition-year-ty/> for further information and online application forms.

- **5th year 2021/2022**

For current Transition Years and those third years going directly into fifth year, please complete your subject options for fifth year on VSware. The 5th year VSware options will open on Thursday January 14th and the deadline is **Friday, 29th January 2021**. You can find out more information on each subject by researching <https://creaghcollege.ie/academic/senior-cycle/>. Further information is also available to the students via MS Teams, their online learning platform.

- **LCA applications 2021/2022**

3rd years and Transition Year students who wish to apply for a place in Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) should do so by **Friday, 29th January 2021**. Online application forms, and further information are available at <https://creaghcollege.ie/lca-leaving-cert-applied/>. It is recommended that students

planning to participate in LCA submit their preferred 5th year optional subjects on VSware (see above). This will mean that should they change their mind about LCA or fail to secure a place, their preferences will still be considered in designing the 5th year timetable.

First year Parent Teacher Meeting (PTM) – date changed to Wednesday 10th February 2021 4.15-6.45pm

We look forward to meeting with you at your first Parent Teacher Meeting for your first year son/daughter. We are carrying out online parent teacher meetings.

TY and 5th Year Online Parent Teacher Meeting is Thursday 4th February 4.15-6.45pm

Our next online TY and 5th Year Online Parent Teacher Meeting is Thursday 4th February 4.15-6.45pm (School closes at 3.05pm for all students).

There are important steps that you need to carry out in advance of the meeting which will be sent to you closer to the date. Please see <https://creaghcollege.ie/parent-teacher-meetings/> for further information closer to the time.

6th Year information

- **Mock Exams**

LC Mocks are scheduled to begin Wednesday 3rd February. This is pending public health advice at the time. Should this change we will inform students and parents immediately.

The focus for 6th Years during the remote learning period needs to be on continuing with their regular learning routine and revision plan as much as they possibly can. Any revision or learning they do during this time will only serve them well when it comes to their exams in June as well as for mock-exams. As difficult as it may be, it is important to remain focused on the learning and the long-term goal of the leaving cert exams and to not to become distracted by other issues/media speculation.

- **CAO applications**

Students and parents need to be aware that the closing date for CAO applications is the **1st February, 5.15pm**. The cost of this application is €45. However, we would encourage all of our students to avail of the early online application, of the **20th January at 5.15pm, at a discounted fee of €30**. Please note that any restricted courses (courses that require auditions, portfolios, interviews, tests) need to be on students' applications before Feb 1st. These courses CANNOT be added after 5.15pm on the 1st February. However, they can be removed at a later date. More information about important dates and the application process are available on <http://www.cao.ie/index.php> and <https://creaghcollege.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/CAO-PPT-for-Parents-Dec2020.pdf>

If any students chose to apply to the CAO at home and not in school before Christmas and have not let their Guidance Counsellor know this, can they please e-mail them to say that they have applied to the CAO at home.

- **HEAR and DARE applications**

The **Higher Education Access Route (HEAR)** is a college and university scheme that offers places on reduced points and extra college support to school leavers from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds who are resident in the Republic of Ireland. The **Disability Access Route to Education (DARE)** is a college access scheme for students who have a Specific Learning and/or Physical Disability.

With regards to the HEAR and DARE access to college schemes, please refer to www.accesscollege.ie for further details. Students have been given information on both the HEAR and DARE scheme in class and have the Powerpoint with this information is on TEAMS. This Powerpoint is also available on <https://creaghcollege.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/CAO-PPT-for-Parents-Dec2020.pdf>

Please note that not all students are eligible for these schemes. It is important to check the eligibility criteria carefully on the www.accesscollege.ie. The Guidance department has identified students who are eligible for the DARE scheme and will be in contact with students in relation to their applications in the coming weeks. If your son/daughter has a physical and/or learning difficulty that the school is NOT aware of, can you please contact either Ms. Travers or Ms. D'Arcy as soon as possible. You can check the eligibility criteria for the HEAR and the DARE college access schemes on the **accesscollege.ie** website.

FAO Parents of 6th Year Students applying to the DARE scheme. The below link is a detailed video of how to apply to the DARE college access scheme. There is an online section that students fill out through their CAO application and this video will assist in this process.

<https://accesscollege.ie/dare/events/>

Please note that the HEAR and DARE access to college schemes are only applicable to certain colleges that students apply to through the CAO application system. A comprehensive list of these colleges is on the accesscollege.ie website.

Any further queries regarding these schemes can be forwarded to your son/daughter's Guidance Counsellor: orlatravers@wwetb.ie or judedarcy@wwetb.ie

- **SUSI Grant Applications**

The SUSI grant application system does not open until April. They operate on a "first come, first served" basis. You can access the eligibility checker however at any stage on www.susi.ie . SUSI grants cover the majority of both CAO and PLC college courses.

- **PLC Courses**

Students wishing to apply for PLC courses should check the individual college websites for application details and deadlines. Further information can be found at careersportal.ie

- **Guidance/Careers Support**

If you have any further queries, please don't hesitate to contact our Guidance Counsellors via e-mail: orlatravers@wwetb.ie / judedarcy@wwetb.ie

Remote Learning and Communication

The overwhelming response to our initial phase of remote teaching and learning during this emergency closure period has been very positive. Where difficulties arise we will do our best to address them in as timely a fashion as possible. We thank all of our school community: teachers, SNAs, support staff, parents and students, for their cooperation and support during these difficult circumstances.

Please see the dedicated section of our website on remote learning for lots of useful tips and information <https://creaghcollege.ie/remote-learning-covid-19/>

In order to help us manage the potentially overwhelming volume of emails and other electronic communications our teaching staff have to deal with, we remind parents of the appropriate channels of communication during this emergency school closure. Matters relating to individual subjects should be raised by email directly with the relevant subject teacher.

Pastoral care and wider student welfare concerns can be raised by email with the student's class tutor. Where appropriate, tutors will relay these matters to year heads. Staff email addresses are available at <https://creaghcollege.ie/meet-our-staff/>

Stay Safe

We are all anxious to return to face-to-face teaching as soon as possible. To do this safely it is important that there are significant reductions in the prevalence of Covid-19 in our community. We encourage all of you to continue to follow all the relevant public health advice and guidance to keep all of us as safe as possible through this crisis.